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Contact Kathie Osterman, Communications and Legislative Services, 402-471-9313,
kathie.osterman@nebraska.gov

DHHS CEO Kerry Winterer Announces Departure

Lincoln— Kerry Winterer, CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services, today announced his intent to leave the agency in mid-December.

"I want to thank Governor Heineman for the opportunity to lead DHHS," said CEO Winterer. "It has been an honor to lead this agency which provides services that are oftentimes life-sustaining to hundreds of thousands of our fellow Nebraskans. I also want to thank all the DHHS employees who are committed in their efforts to provide these important services to Nebraskans. They are mission driven and do great things for the people of the state every day."

In 2009, Gov. Dave Heineman appointed Winterer to head the state's largest agency with a budget of over \$3 billion, and more than 5,000 employees located in offices and facilities across the state. The agency provides services through six divisions: behavioral health, children and family services, developmental disabilities, public health, Medicaid and long-term care, and the state's veterans' homes.

Winterer said he will work with Gov. Heineman to determine his specific departure date.

Winterer said it has been an honor to serve the citizens of Nebraska and cited efforts to change the agency's culture as the most significant and lasting accomplishment during his tenure.

"Every DHHS employee has completed training in the importance of customer service and now employees are in the process of being trained on what is accountability and their personal role in raising the level of accountability in the agency," Winterer said. "We have also made significant and needed changes in the processes in our Finance area."

"One of my biggest disappointments has been our inability to focus as much public attention on the Department's successes, which are many, as there has been on agency shortcomings," he said. "I hope that in the future DHHS is better recognized for the quality of the work it does."

He also highlighted:

- Establishing an Internal Audit group responsible for auditing all program areas, identifying issues, and working with staff to implement corrections.
- Eliminating areas of noncompliance with federal and state requirements.
The state's four veterans' homes have received deficiency-free surveys two years in a row, with the Eastern Nebraska Veteran's Home having five.
- Recovering from the troubled child welfare privatization efforts begun in 2008.
- The safe reduction of wards in the custody of the Department, from 6,148 in December 2009 to 4,107 today, a 33 percent reduction, along with the development of more services to help families at risk.
- The DHHS response to public health emergencies, such as tornadoes and floods, as well as H1N1 and Ebola.
- The progress made at the Beatrice State Developmental Center in quality of care and requalifying for Medicaid funding, and increased community-based services for people with developmental disabilities.

Winterer did not provide information about future plans at this time, other than to say he will enjoy spending the holidays with his family.